

Education Sunday

20 February 2011

Firm Foundations

'It's only bricks and mortar'. Well, that's one way to describe a building – but there is so much more! An architect designed it, a builder dug the foundations, a surveyor oversaw it, an electrician wired it, a roofer made it water-tight, a glazier added windows. And then a business is started, a shop begins to trade, a family move in – and the building comes to life. The structure is decorated, reshaped, fashioned to suit its occupants' needs – all building on the work started by the construction team.

One understanding of education is laying the foundations needed for life. The readings for Education Sunday 2011 offer a chance to muse further on this. Jesus Christ is the foundation (I Corinthians 3) and whether we are educators at school, church or home we need to build with regard to our faith.

So what 'materials' might we use? Matthew 5 suggests values that run counter to cultural norms, which offer children and young people a perspective on life that encompasses compassion, forgiveness and generosity. Psalm 119 shows the pathway of God's law – signposting obedience with understanding.

But education – in whatever context – also needs to build children's spiritual lives as well as their intellect and moral capacity. Space for God to break through – and space for children and young people to glimpse the Divine - needs to have its place in the building blueprint, to give them a chance to glimpse holiness (Leviticus 19). Awe, wonder and curiosity contribute to a child's spiritual growth and flourishing. We omit them at our peril.

On solid foundations, children and young people, created in the image of God, can fashion their unique identity and flourish in their human potential.

2011 marks the bicentenary of the National Society (of the Church of England), one of the many denominational providers of church schools. The church schools it established (and which it continues to support) helped lay the foundations for mass, and, later, free school provision in England.

Education Sunday offers an opportunity to celebrate the churches' gift to the nation of education for all, alongside celebrating Christian educators in all places of learning, whose vocation, skills and care shape young lives in school, church and home. And it gives each of us the chance to look back in thankfulness for those who laid the foundations in our own lives, allowing us to grow in faith and understanding.

Mary Hawes, *National Children's Advisor for the Church of England*



About Education Sunday

Education Sunday is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone involved in the world of education. For more than 100 years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales (traditionally on the ninth Sunday before Easter).

The resources are designed to help you prepare for your own celebration on or around Education Sunday, or on any other day throughout the year, such as at the start or end of the academic year. You can use these resources in your church, in local schools, colleges and universities and in other places of learning.

Next year Education Sunday will be on 5 February 2012.

LECTIONARY READINGS*

for 20 February 2011

- Leviticus 19:1-2
- Psalm 119:33-40
- Matthew 5:38-48
- 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

*Variations in the Roman Catholic Lectionary:

Lev 19:1-2,17-18; Ps 102:1-4,8,10,12-13 r.8; John 14:23; 1 John 2:5;
Matt 5:38-48; 1 Cor 3:16-23

PRAYER

God, give us the strength to be wise.

We pray that you might open our eyes to the world around us,
that we will be a generation unafraid to stand on the rock,
even as those around us build grand castles in the sand.

Let us stand firm when wind and rain batters us from all sides,
make us a people brave enough
to clothe ourselves only in what we need
and not in what the world says we should have.

Give us the strength to be foolish, God,
foolish enough to believe that we can change the world with you,
humble enough to sing from our shack on the rocks
and meek enough to get alongside those that need our support.

When people around us fall, Lord,
give us compassion and grace,
so that we will be the ones to hold out our hands,
and they might see you reflected in our eyes. Amen.

*Taken from God's Open Word, Methodist Prayer Handbook
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FURTHER RESOURCES

Further resources including **prayers, sermon outlines, all-age worship ideas, song and hymn suggestions and school assemblies** are available from www.educationsunday.org

They can also be obtained by contacting any of the following churches and organisations which may also produce supplementary material:

Association of Christian Teachers

94a London Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 1NX
www.christians-in-education.org.uk

Baptist Union of Great Britain

129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxon OX11 8RT
www.baptist.org.uk

The Catholic Church Catholic Education Service

39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX
www.cesew.org.uk

The Church of England & The National Society

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ
www.natsoc.org.uk

Churches Together in England

27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH
www.churches-together.org.uk

The Methodist Church Education Office

25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR
www.methodist.org.uk

The Salvation Army Schools & Colleges Unit

UK & Ireland Office, 101 Newington Causeway,
London SE1 6BN
www.salvationarmy.org.uk/schools

Student Christian Movement

Unit 308F, The Big Peg, 120 Vyse Street, The Jewellery
Quarter, Birmingham B18 6NF
www.movement.org.uk

The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT
www.urc.org.uk

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The Education Sunday 2011 theme was devised by an ecumenical steering group co-ordinated by Churches Together in England representing the following Christian denominations and organisations: the Association of Christian Teachers, the Baptist Union, the Catholic Church, the Church of England and the National Society, the Methodist Church, The Salvation Army, the Student Christian Movement and the United Reformed Church. The material in this resource was written and sourced by members of the Education Sunday steering group. All worship material in this publication may be freely copied for single-occasion use as part of Christian worship. Any organisations or individuals wishing to reproduce this material in any other circumstances should seek prior permission from the Education Sunday Steering Group, Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH.

